

Environment

As residents of Washington state, we are blessed to live in one of the most beautiful places on Earth. Whether it's fishing, hiking, hunting, skiing, boating, biking, or just walking along the beach, Washingtonians treasure our natural lands and want to be sure our children and grandchildren will be able to enjoy them as we have.

Our area also benefits economically from our natural resources. From timber to hydroelectricity, farming to fishing, the abundance of this region has long been a source of jobs and economic prosperity. I am convinced that we can and must continue these traditions and benefit from natural resources while protecting the clean water, healthy forests, pristine beaches, and wild lands for generations to come.

When legislation has threatened our natural heritage, as with proposals to allowing oil drilling off our coast or continued contamination from the Hanford Nuclear reservation, I have stepped up and led successful efforts to block it. To support our National Parks here in Southwest Washington and across the nation, I founded the Congressional National Parks Caucus and I successfully introduced the legislation that established the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park at the mouth of the Columbia River. I have also supported expansion and rehabilitation of Wildlife Refuges like the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge in Thurston County and the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge in Clark County. In Congress, I am leading efforts to prevent and eradicate invasive species like Spartina grass, which threaten to destroy Willapa Bay.

As we work together on these measures to protect the environment, I have also become aware that the regulatory permitting process is unnecessarily cumbersome, time consuming, expensive, and sometimes even prevents efforts designed to protect or restore the environment. To address this problem, I have brought all of the key federal and state regulatory agencies together with ports, farmers, foresters, builders, and others to find ways to work together to streamline the process in ways that protect the environment, but reduce unnecessary inefficiencies, costs, and delays. I have also championed legislative reforms in Congress to help achieve these goals. Though work remains to be done, these efforts have already substantially reduced permitting backlogs, simplified the permitting application and tracking process, and led to much greater coordination among agencies.

Preserving our National Parks

On average, more than 300 million people visit America's National Parks each year. Our nationwide park system is one of our nation's greatest treasures and we should do everything possible to preserve it for generations to come. Despite the far reaching and important work of the National Parks Service, there has never been a congressional caucus dedicated to furthering the mission of the National Park Service.

Congressman Baird is a co-founder and co-chair of the bipartisan National Parks Caucus. The goal of the Caucus is to raise Congressional awareness and educate members of Congress on issues facing the National Parks and the National Park Service through meetings and events. The Caucus also advocates on behalf our parks to ensure they have adequate financial and other resources to meet their needs and to help preserve their treasures for generations to come.

In 2016 the National Park Service will celebrate its centennial. To help prepare the Parks for their 100th anniversary, Congressman Baird has introduced the National Parks Centennial Act. This legislation will help the National Parks address their \$800 million annual operating deficit and estimated \$6.8 billion maintenance backlog by allowing taxpayers to designate a portion of a tax refund or overpayment to the National Parks.

In addition, in 2004, Congressman Baird led the effort to create the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park. The establishment of this park ensures that sites on both sides of the Columbia River are recognized for their role in Lewis and Clark's journey. The bill received broad support from local communities, state, and federal government representatives and the US Department of the Interior. The park incorporates an existing Park Service site at Fort Clatsop in Oregon and three Washington state sites: Cape Disappointment State Park (formerly Fort Canby), Megler's Rest Area, and Station Camp near McGowan, Washington. The creation of a national historic park incorporating Southwest Washington and Oregon's Lewis and Clark sites is crucial to provide visitors with the full story of this historic journey in the Pacific Northwest.

Buying Green to Save Green

Congressman Baird is leading an effort to encourage consumers to spend their upcoming stimulus rebate checks on energy efficient products and services. He believes that there is a unique opportunity to invest the money in ways that will offer individual savings, stimulate the economy, and lower energy costs for years to come. He reached out to some of the largest home product retailers in the nation and many agreed to offer special incentives and promotions on energy efficient products and services.

Congressman Baird believes that this is a multi-win situation. Thanks to the promotions offered by retailers, people will save money right away on the purchase price of these products. In many instances, there are also tax credits and other benefits available for energy efficient products. By investing in energy conservation products, people will save even more money on their energy bills for years to come and increase the value of their home in the process. Nationwide, as more and more people reduce energy consumption, we will reduce the overall demand for energy, helping to lower prices across the board. Finally, by taking these steps together, we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help prevent climate change and ocean acidification.

Addressing Ocean Acidification

Congressman Baird is leading efforts in the House of Representatives to address ocean acidification, another severe environmental consequence of the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. He believes that the impact of ocean acidification on our planet could be devastating. If the foundation of the food chain, such as coral and plankton, is disrupted, it affects everything from shellfish to marine mammals to fisheries. Congressman Baird believes that we should research and investigate ocean acidification early on to minimize current and future environmental impacts. That is why he has introduced the Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring (FOARAM) Act to establish a comprehensive, interagency program to conduct research on ocean acidification and its consequences for marine ecosystems and the communities and industries that depend on them.

Creating a National Heritage Area in Southwest Washington

Congressman Baird has introduced legislation to authorize a study of Pacific County and Wahkiakum County, along with two counties in Oregon, as the potential site of a National Heritage Area. National Heritage Areas are overseen by the National Park Service and are designated spaces that have natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources that combine to form a cohesive, distinctive landscape. Heritage Areas are created to help residents, government agencies, non-profit groups and private partners to collaboratively plan and implement programs and projects that recognize, preserve and celebrate the area. Congressman Baird's bill passed the House on May 7, 2007.

Protecting Upper White Salmon River

The White Salmon River, which feeds into the Columbia River between Underwood and White Salmon Washington, is known for its exhilarating whitewater rapids, stunning scenery, and abundant fish and wildlife. In 1986, the river's outstanding qualities received national recognition when Congress designated the lower eight miles of the White Salmon as a National Wild and Scenic River. Congress also directed the Forest Service to study the upper White Salmon for possible designation into

the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

In August of 2005, Congressman Baird's legislation designating a portion of the upper White Salmon River as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was signed into law. The Upper White Salmon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act will preserve the river's free-flowing nature, enhance tourism, and foster economic growth by protecting its natural beauty.

The legislation has incorporated the upper White Salmon River segments within the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, totaling 20 miles, into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The designation has received broad public support within the local community and throughout the region, including: the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Friends of the White Salmon River, and American Rivers, which have all supported this legislation.

Defending the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

The arctic wilderness is critically important to supporting a variety of plant, wildlife, and marine species. Proposals to allow oil drilling within this area would severely and permanently disrupt the ecosystem and endanger the existence of many species. Congressman Baird is a supporter of the Arctic Wilderness Act, legislation that would permanently protect the Arctic Refuge from oil and gas development.

Streamlining the Environmental Permitting Process

Protecting the environment is always a priority, but regulatory processing and permitting have become unnecessarily costly and time consuming. In recent years, Congressman Baird has organized a series of meetings throughout Southwest Washington to bring local business leaders, farmers, builders, ports and others together with federal, state and local officials to improve the permitting process. As a direct result, several federal and state agencies have made significant progress in streamlining permits, reducing application backlogs and complexity, and improving coordination to expedite the process. There is still work to be done, and much room for improvement. Congressman Baird will continue to work with the consumers of permits and agency representatives to push for further improvements in efficiency and savings in time and money.

Additionally, Congressman Baird successfully passed legislation through the House and Senate that extended Section 214 of the 2000 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). This provision allows public entities, like ports and cities, to help expedite the Army Corps of Engineers' permitting process. Under Section 214, non-federal public entities can provide the Corps with funds to hire additional staff to process permits. Without the extension Congressman Baird secured, the Corps' permitting backlog would increase significantly, causing serious

delays for critical economic development projects.

Preserving Pacific Northwest Salmon

Congressman Baird wants to rehabilitate listed species of Salmon in the Pacific Northwest. He has secured funding to support projects to improve salmon habitat throughout the Pacific Northwest. He has also introduced the Endangered Salmon Predation Prevention Act. The legislation would allow for the lethal removal of the most aggressive sea lions in order to deter predation and help protect endangered salmon as they return to spawn. California sea lions are having a significant impact on spring salmon returns. In recent years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has observed that thousands of returning salmon are killed by sea lions in the area around Bonneville Dam alone.

The bill creates a temporary expedited process for the states of Washington and Oregon and the four Columbia River treaty tribes to obtain permits for the lethal removal of a limited number of California sea lions preying on salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River. The streamlined process can be used in cases where non-lethal methods to discourage sea lion predation have been shown to be ineffective. For the past several years fish and wildlife agencies have been using non-lethal measures, including 24-hours a day, 7-days a week, with no measurable impact on California sea lions.

To read more about Congressman Baird's efforts to preserve wild salmon, visit his [salmon page](#).

Environmental
Protection Agency

Washington
State Department of Ecology

House
of Representatives Committee on Resources

Senate
Committee on Environment and Public Works

